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LAMB

A FILM BY YARED ZELEKE



GLORIA FILMS, SLUM KID FILMS & HEIMATFILM
PRESENT



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INTERNATIONAL PRESS

LES PIQUANTES

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SYNOPSIS

Ephraim is a young Ethiopian boy. His father leaves him and his sheep, from which he is inseparable, to be looked after by distant relatives, far from his drought-ridden homeland. Ephraim isn't very good at farming, but he has a hidden talent: he is an excellent cook. One day, his uncle tells him that they have to sacrifice his sheep for the next religious feast. The young boy, however, is ready to do anything to save his only friend and return home.

SHORT SYNOPSIS: When Ephraim, an Ethiopian boy, is sent from his homeland to live with distant relatives, he takes his beloved sheep with him. One day, his uncle announces that he will have to sacrifice his sheep for the upcoming religious feast, but Ephraim is ready to do anything to save his only friend and return home.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

There are parallels between Ephraim, the main character in *Lamb*, and myself. Strong women raised me in Ethiopia. I preferred to cook in the kitchen with my grandmother rather than play sports with the other boys in my neighborhood. At the age of ten, the ongoing conflicts and chaos in my country caused me to lose my home and family.

LAMB is analogous to my life's journey in that it is deeply personal and inescapably political. It is a semi-autobiographical, coming-of-age drama that incorporates the heart, heartache, and humor of everyday life in my homeland.

I grew up in the slums of Addis Ababa during one of the darkest periods of Ethiopia's 3,000-year history. Emperor Haile Selassie had just been deposed

in a military coup and the country was consequently thrown into cycles of war and famine. In its attempt for authority and control, the military junta known as the "Derg" (the Committee) implemented a tyrannical rule. Tens of thousands of dissents and political opponents were executed and imprisoned without trial. I remember the soldiers who came to imprison my father; the cries over a cousin who was shot dead because he was educated, a doctor; and my mother calling me into her bedroom one day to tell me she was leaving me in the "cursed slum" to find a new life for herself on the better side of Addis Ababa.

Despite all the chaos, I had a happy childhood in Ethiopia. The traditional African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" rings true about my upbringing. The adults in my neighborhood collectively looked after all the children, keeping us distracted from the horrors of the Derg with school, church, soccer, and movies (mainly from Russia, India, and East Germany). My primary caretaker was my grandmother, who was revered for her storytelling skills as much as she was for her coffee ceremonies. (She was from Kaffa, after all, the birthplace of the coffee bean.) I remember my aunt's spiced bread; my cross-dressing cousin's comedy act; the forested, majestic mountains surrounding the city; and the bonfires, flowers, and singing during the holidays.





There are fairytale-like aspects to *Lamb*: A pubescent child, searching for a way home, with his best friend lamb, against his evil uncle, amidst strange mountains and a ‘forbidden forest’. The story, however, is more realist than a fable. It takes place under the harsh conditions of a hard-labor farm life in Ethiopia. The women may appear as a kind of fairy to offer redemption for Ephraim. But they are ultimately unsentimental maternal figures. While *Lamb* is shared through a child’s eyes, the subject matter as well as tone remains complex and nuanced. The nine-year-old boy loses his mother and becomes separated from his father as well as homeland. The story does not shy away with the seriousness of his trauma. But neither does it dwell on the tragedy. In a non-romanticized portrait, scenes that are tender, colorful, humorous, and hopeful are all woven throughout Ephraim’s journey.

The themes of *LAMB* mainly deal with being displaced and dispossessed of home. Ephraim longs for his old family and attempts to return to where he comes from. Family and food as the embodiment of home also runs throughout the story. Ethiopia is engraved in the world’s collective memory because of the famine in the 1980s. The question of food and its paradoxes, therefore, is an important element in the narrative. Ephraim lost his mother to famine; he is always in search of or stealing food to feed his beloved lamb; and he applies

his cooking skill, (going against the customary gender role), to save his lamb and go back to his homeland. Hence, food also symbolizes survival and love. While his relatives view the lamb as the only source of “meat for the holiday”, Ephraim sees the lamb as his only friend.

LAMB attempts to explore how an individual, in this case a child, deals with loss. Tragedies of great magnitude are not uncommon amongst the most marginalized persons in, especially, the poorer parts of the world. But this coming-of-age story is universal in that it is about coming to terms with the tragic forces of life in order to survive and even grow.

I want to cinematically capture these contrasts and contradictions of my beloved home country to share with the world. *Lamb* is a means for me to reflect upon the complex and nuanced reality of the Ethiopia I remember. That in a time of war, famine, and oppression, people lived and loved that much more. We all can connect to the rich emotional life that is a part of our humanity. Beyond the barriers of geography, history, and culture is the dialogue of emotions that we have the ability to empathize and engage with. Thus *LAMB* is not only my story, but can be that of anyone.



YARED ZELEKE

Yared Zeleke was born in Ethiopia in 1978. He holds a bachelors degree in International Development from Clark University (United States) and studied cinema at New York University, majoring in writing and directing. He worked for a number of NGOs in the United States, Ethiopia, Namibia, and Norway, before embarking on a directing career. Yared has written, produced, directed and edited several short documentaries (Allula) and fiction shorts (Housewarming). He has also worked with the director Joshua Atesh Litle on the documentary *The Furious Force of Rhymes*, which received a number of awards. In Ethiopia, his native country, he has edited documentary films for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. In 2015, Yared completed his first feature-length movie, called LAMB, filmed on the high plateaux of Northern Ethiopia.



CAST

Ephraim	Rediat AMARE
Tsion	Kidist SIYUM
Emama	Welela ASSEFA
Solomon	Surafel TEKA
Azeb	Rahel TESHOME
Abraham	Indris MOHAMED



CREW

Director	Yared ZELEKE
Screenplay	Yared ZELEKE
With the collaboration of	Géraldine BAJARD
Music	Christophe CHASSOL
Director of Photography	Josée DESHAIES
Editing	Véronique BRUQUE
Sound	Till Heinrich RÖLLINGHOFF
Sound Design	Rainer HEESCH
Sound Mix	Tobias FLEIG
Production Designer	Laurence BRENGUIER
Costume Designer	Sandra BERREBI
Producers	Laurent LAVOLE / GLORIA FILMS Ama AMPADU / SLUM KID FILMS Johannes REXIN / HEIMATFILM
Co-producers	David HURST / DUBLIN FILMS Alan R. MILLIGAN / FILM FARMS ZDF / DAS KLEINE FERNSEHSPIEL
In cooperation with	ARTE
French Distribution	Haut et Court
International Sales	Films Distribution



REDIAT AMARE KIDIST SIYUM WELELA ASSEFA SURAFEL TEKA RAHEL TESHOME INDRIS MOHAMED
SCREENPLAY YARED ZELEKE WITH THE COLLABORATION OF GÉRALDINE BAJARD MUSIC CHRISTOPHE CHASSOL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOSÉE DESHAIES
EDITOR VERONIQUE BRUQUE SOUND TILL HEINRICH RÖLLINGHOFF SOUND DESIGN RAINER HEESCH SOUND MIX TOBIAS FLEIG
PRODUCTION DESIGN LAURENCE BRENGUIER COSTUME DESIGN SANDRA BERREBI 1ST AD BARBARA CANALE LINE PRODUCER MESERETH ARGAW
PRODUCTION MANAGER DIANE THIN PRODUCED BY AMA AMPADU LAURENT LAVOLÉ JOHANNES REXIN COPRODUCER ALAN R. MILLIGAN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID HURST BETTINA BROKEMPER A SLUM KID FILMS GLORIA FILMS HEIMATFILM PRODUCTION
IN COPRODUCTION WITH DUBLIN FILMS, FILM FARMS, ZDF/DAS KLEINE FERNSEHSPIEL IN COOPERATION WITH ARTE

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